

THE MOUNTAIN GUIDES
FROM SAGE BOOKS

Guide to the Colorado Mountains
by Robert M. Ormes

Guide to the Wyoming Mountains
and Wilderness Areas
by Orrin H. and Lorraine Bonney

Guide to the New Mexico Mountains
by Herbert E. Ungnade

Guide
to the
New Mexico
Mountains

Herbert E. Ungnade



SAGE BOOKS, *Denver*

1965

Huertas (the gardens) Canyon and return to Albuquerque via Placitas and Bernalillo. The loop drive, State Road 44, goes past Sandia Peak Ski Area which has restaurants and a lift to the top of the ridge at 10,378'. Near Las Huertas picnic ground the road passes the trail to Sandia Cave where one of the most important archaeological discoveries in the state was made. The cave is to be opened to the public in the near future.

Two campgrounds and the start of a trail at the base of the western face of the Sandias can be reached by secondary roads from Juan Tabo Boulevard or from Alameda.

The Manzano Mountains south of Tijeras have a paved road along the entire east slope which connects Tijeras with Mountainair. The road goes through the Spanish villages of Escabosa, Chilili, Tajique, Torreon, and Manzano. Chilili, Tajique, and Torreon are built near the ruins of the Saline Pueblos which were abandoned in the 17th century because of Apache raids.

Cedro Peak in the northern Manzanita section can be visited as a side trip on a secondary road. It offers views over Tijeras Canyon and the southern part of the Sandia Mountains. Farther south the Tajique-Torreon Loop Road goes through Tajique Canyon which has fine stands of maple trees. Secondary roads from Manzano lead to Capilla Peak (9,375') and Red Canyon campground (7,500').

The Quarai Ruins State Monument preserving the ruins of the 17th century mission church is just off State Road 10 near Punta de Agua, 8 miles north of Mountainair. Another ruin of the same period (abandoned in 1670) is found in Abo State Monument, 9 miles west of Mountainair. The return trip goes over Abo Pass on U.S. 60 and north on U.S. 85 in view of the western face of the Manzano Mountains. The new John F. Kennedy picnic area on the west side of the mountains is reached by road from Belen.

The Sacramento Mountains

The large valley extending more than 100 miles north of El Paso, Texas, the Tularosa Basin, is bordered on the west side by

the San Andres-Oscura Range and on the east by the Sacramento Mountain Ranges. It contains extensive lava flows and the gypsum deposits of the White Sands National Monument. The main north-south highway, U.S. 54, runs on the east side of the basin through Carrizozo and Alamogordo. Most of the west side including the San Andres and Oscura Mountains is now in the White Sands Missile Range.

In the vicinity of Corona, U.S. 54 goes through the foothills of the Gallinas Mountains. It continues south past the dome-shaped uplifts of the Jicarilla, Patos, and Carrizo Mountains on the east and the malpais on the west to Carrizozo. The lava flows, which came from Little Black Peak and Broken Back Crater, will become accessible from the new Valley of Fires State Park approximately 3 miles northwest of Carrizozo.

State Road 349, 4 miles north of Carrizozo, leads northeast to the ghost mining town of White Oaks at the foot of Carrizo Mountain; secondary roads from there continue to Jicarilla and Ancho.

U.S. 380 east of Carrizozo runs south of Carrizo and Tucson Mountains and crosses the Sacramento Range at Indian Divide (6,996'). On the eastern slope it continues along the south side of the Capitan Mountains. Secondary roads from Capitan and Hondo circle this range and a Forest Service road traverses these mountains at Capitan Gap (7,452'). Points of interest along U.S. 380 are Smokey the Bear's Museum, Fort Stanton, the Fort Stanton Caves, and Lincoln State Monument.

The mining village of Nogal can be visited by driving south from U.S. 380 on State Road 37, 6 miles west of Indian Divide. This road connects with State Road 48 at Angus. Continuing south on State Road 37, one comes to Alto and Ruidoso, resorts and gateways to the Sierra Blanca Mountains. Side roads lead up Bonito Creek, to the lookout Mon Jeau, and to the Sierra Blanca Ski Area. From Ruidoso one can return to the Tularosa Basin by way of U.S. 70 over Apache Summit and Mescalero, or continue south on the eastern slope on State Road 24 to Cloudcroft.

The more scenic road to Cloudcroft is State Road 83 which turns off from U.S. 70, 3 miles north of Alamogordo. The paved highway goes through the western scarp of the Sacramento Mountains with its steep valleys and cliffs of sandstone and the only highway tunnel in the state. Near the summit the road passes the old wooden trestle of a former railroad from Alamogordo to Cloudcroft.

Sunspot, the solar observatory of the U.S. Air Force, is 17 miles south of Cloudcroft on paved road. Regular tours of the observatory are scheduled once a week. A popular circle drive includes Sunspot, the road south from there along the Sacramento River, and the return along the rim of the Sacramento Mountains to High Rolls on State Road 83. Trips on the east slope of the mountains to Mayhill on State Roads 84 or 24, or the Forest Service road along the upper Peñasco Canyon, go past the scars of the Allen Canyon Fire which burned 16,700 acres of forest in 1951. Near Mayhill, Captain H. W. Stanton, for whom the fort is named, lost his life in a battle with Mescalero Apache Indians.

State Road 24 on the east slope of the Sacramento Mountains connects with roads in the Guadalupe Mountains, but they are more easily reached from U.S. 285. State Road 137, 12 miles north of Carlsbad, is paved to within 8 miles of Sitting Bull Falls. Continuing on State Road 137 one can drive to the rim of the Guadalupe and along the rim to the north end of the range.

The Mogollon Volcanic Plateau

A large part of southwestern New Mexico is included in the volcanic plateau which extends west from the Black Range to the Arizona border, and from the Plains of San Augustin to the Deming Plain. Most of this area is accessible by paved roads.

From U.S. 85 south of Caballo, State Road 90 leads west through the mining towns of Hillsboro and Kingston and over the Black Range at Emory Pass (8,178') to the Mimbres Valley.

State Road 27 from Hillsboro to Lake Valley was the old stagecoach road to the rich silver mines in the region.

In the Mimbres Valley one can drive south to the City of Rocks State Park or continue west to the vast Santa Rita open-pit copper mine and beyond to Silver City, from where all parts of the plateau can be reached. State Road 90 south from there to Lordsburg crosses the Big Burro Mountains and the continental divide south of Signal. Secondary roads lead to the old model mining town of Tyrone and to Leopold in the Burro Mountains mining district.

U.S. 180 north of Silver City passes through the western edge of the plateau. It crosses the continental divide just west of the city at 6,230' and winds through Drunken Man Canyon to the Catron County line. Continuing north in the San Francisco River valley, the road goes through Glenwood and Alma and over the Saliz Mountains at Saliz Pass (6,436'). From the junction with State Road 12 north of the pass, U.S. 180 climbs northwest over the Frisco Divide to Luna and then into Arizona. State Road 12 goes northeast through Reserve, Apache Creek, and Aragon, crosses the Plains of San Augustin, and meets U.S. 60 at Datil, from where one can circle the area via Socorro and U.S. 85 on pavement.

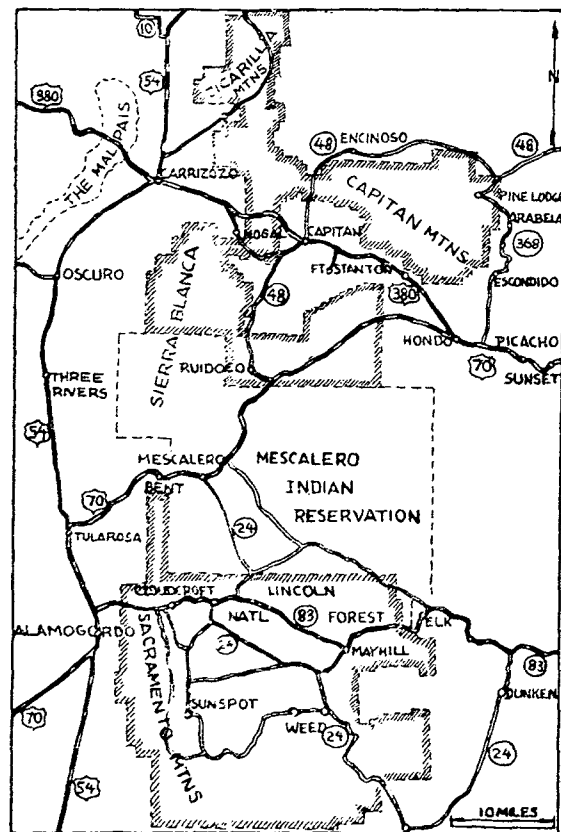
Side roads from this main loop which are not entirely paved lead into the Gila National Forest and some of the more remote mountain country in this region. From Glenwood one can drive to the Catwalk in Whitewater Canyon.

A 235-mile circle drive around the Gila Wilderness Area starts at Alma, climbing in numerous curves to the ghost town of Mogollon on State Road 78 and then over the Mogollon Mountains at Silver Creek Divide into the Gila River drainage. The road continues past the Tularosa, Elk, and Long Canyon Mountain Ranges, O-Bar-O and Black Mountains, and the Beaverhead Ranger Station, to the Mimbres Valley, and returns to Silver City by way of Santa Rita and Fort Bayard.

The Inner Loop scenic drive goes from Silver City to Pinos Altos at the continental divide, then along Cherry Creek, across

fits Soledad Peak. Doc Noss from Hot Springs supposedly re-discovered the mine in 1937, only to lose it when a cave-in blocked the entrance. Other legends place the mine in the Organ Mountains but no evidence ever has been found there.

In the southern part of the San Andres Mountains just west of Jornada Range Reserve is the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge where desert bighorn sheep are protected. This refuge includes the San Andres Peak area. The peak can be climbed easily from the road which parallels the mountains on the west side. Permission is required as the area is in the Missile Range.



THE SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS

Some maps label only the mountains south of U.S. 70 as Sacramento Mountains, but the U.S. Geological Survey designates the entire 90-mile mountain range from a point 40 miles north of the Texas border to the northern end of the Jicarillas as the Sacramento Mountains. This classification has been retained and the Jicarilla, Capitan, Sierra Blanca, and Sacramento Mountains are regarded as subranges. Single mountains such as Carrizo, Patos, and Tucson Mountains which stand apart from the subranges are included in the Sacramento range. The greater part of these mountains is in Lincoln National Forest.

Jicarilla Mountains. The northernmost mountains in the Sacramento range are the Jicarillas, 8 miles southeast of Ancho. The main mass of these mountains rises to an altitude of 7,900' and consists of intrusive quartz monzonite porphyry which crops out near the village of Jicarilla and at Jack's Peak. It is overlain elsewhere by various sediments.

Cowboys found placer gold in a gulch near Jicarilla in 1850 and during the following years some \$90,000's worth was mined. The Jack Mines on the west side of Jack's Peak have furnished magnetite-hematite ore. Attempts have been made in the past to exploit abundant gypsum and clay deposits, but at present there is no mining in these mountains. Lack of water makes gold mining uneconomical.

The White Oaks mining district 10 miles south of the Jicarilla Mountains was centered around White Oaks Canyon northeast of Carrizozo, where the ghost town of White Oaks is located. The district was discovered in 1880 when three prospectors, Harry

Baxter, Jack Winters, and the desperado John Wilson, panned for gold in a gulch on Baxter Mountain (7,285') which is named for Harry Baxter. Wilson found gold in the canyon and all three staked claims. Since Wilson had a price on his head, he sold out to his partners, reportedly for nine silver dollars, a horse, and a gun. The mines in the gulch yielded much gold, particularly the Old Abe Mine. A rich vein in this mine was 1,400' deep and produced 3 million dollars' worth.

Gold-bearing strata along the Vera Cruz Mountain laccolith were mined in the early part of the present century. Other mines were in Lone Mountain, and iron as well as soft coal deposits were found east of White Oaks.

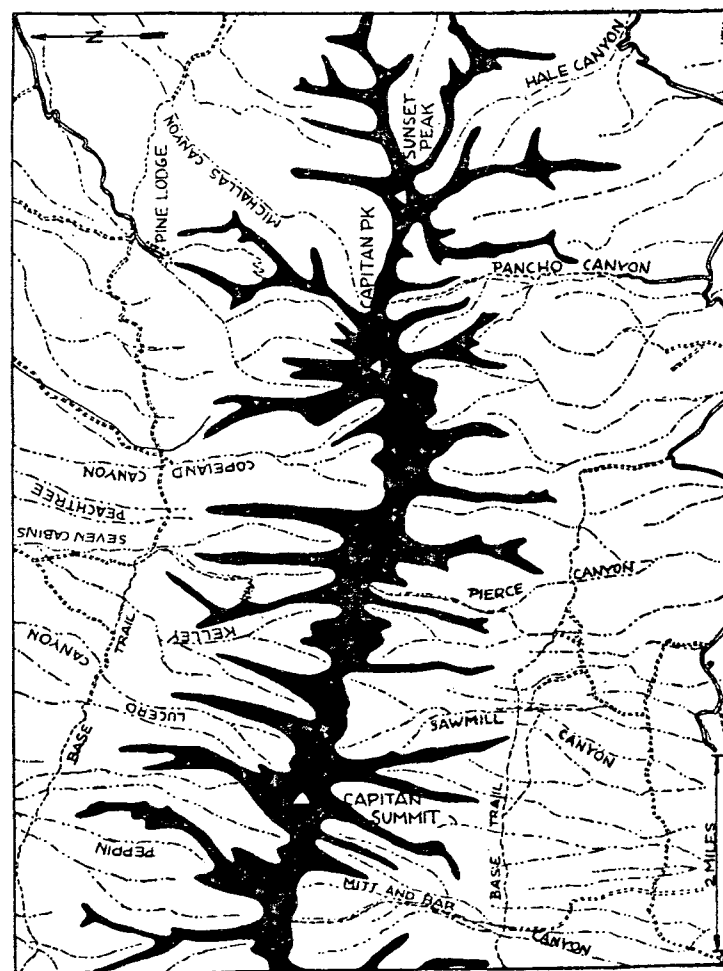
Mines southeast of Little Black Peak (5,679') on Little Black Peak quad, are usually included in the White Oaks district. They have furnished gold, tungsten, and iron ores. The peak is a little cinder cone located 8 miles north and slightly west of Carrizozo. It stands 85' above the plain and has a crater 32' deep. The malpais came from vents at Little Black Peak. Other basaltic flows northwest of the malpais probably came from vents near Broken Back Crater, 8 miles distant.

Capitan Mountains. Among the mountains east of Carrizozo; Carrizo, Vera Cruz, and the Capitan Mountains, consist of igneous rocks and can be classified as laccoliths (intrusions into sedimentary rocks) in which the original overlying sediments have been removed largely by erosion.

The Capitan Mountains farthest east from Carrizozo and just north of U.S. 380 are some 23 miles long but only 8 miles wide, unlike the usual laccolith which is round. The local Indian name for the Capitan range means "Mountain that stands alone," which describes its appearance from the east. The village of Capitan is probably named after the mountains, although some claim that it is named after a Captain Baca who settled there in 1868.

The mountain range is made up of two sections which are divided by a low pass, Capitan Gap (7,452') northeast of Capitan. The highest summit, Capitan Peak, is in the eastern portion. The wooded range had a disastrous fire in 1950 which burned the

slopes. After the fire, a little bear cub was found clinging to a tree, burned and hungry. It was nursed back to health and flown to the National Zoo in Washington, D. C., where it became the living symbol of Smokey, the forest fire-preventing bear of the U.S. Forest Service.



Commercial deposits of iron and thorium-bearing minerals have been found near West Mountain in the western section of the Capitans. Coal deposits west of Capitan were mined for a time at the turn of the century, but large reserves remain.

Capitan Peak (10,083'), on Capitan Mountain quad, can be climbed by a 6-mile trail from Pine Lodge. This trail continues beyond the peak along the ridge to Capitan Pass for a distance of about 14 miles. The last 7 miles from Capitan summit to the pass are now a service road for the repeater station on the summit. Parallel base trails run along the north and south sides of the mountains and the Pierce Canyon trail from the south traverses the ridge at Pierce Canyon Pass (9,242') to come out near the Fox and Fur Lodge in Seven Cabins Canyon on the north side. A portion of the northern trail east of Seven Cabins Canyon is now also a road.

West Mountain (8,842'), on Capitan quad, can be climbed from State Road 48 north of Capitan by a 2-mile trail from Jacob Spring on the northwest side. An old logging road on the south side of the mountain leads to the summit.

The three dome-shaped mountains between Carrizozo and the Capitan range north of U.S. 380, Tucson, Carrizo, and Patos Mountains, are found on Capitan quad.

Tucson Mountain (8,308') has an old road to the top. This is not maintained and very rough. The mountain can be climbed from the east side by the Tucson Mountain trail which starts from the National Forest boundary northwest of Capitan or from Bernado Canyon on the northwest side by using the Goat Springs trail which runs into the old road.

Carrizo Mountain (9,656') is climbed via the 4-mile Johnnie Canyon Trail on the southeast side or the 5.5-mile Water Canyon trail from White Oaks. A radio station on a shoulder of the mountain can be reached by road.

Patos Mountain (8,508') is accessible from the old wagon road between White Oaks and the Phillips Ranch and from the base trail on the north side. White Oaks Canyon may be driven 2 miles up to the old power plant and hiked 2.5 miles to the trail. From

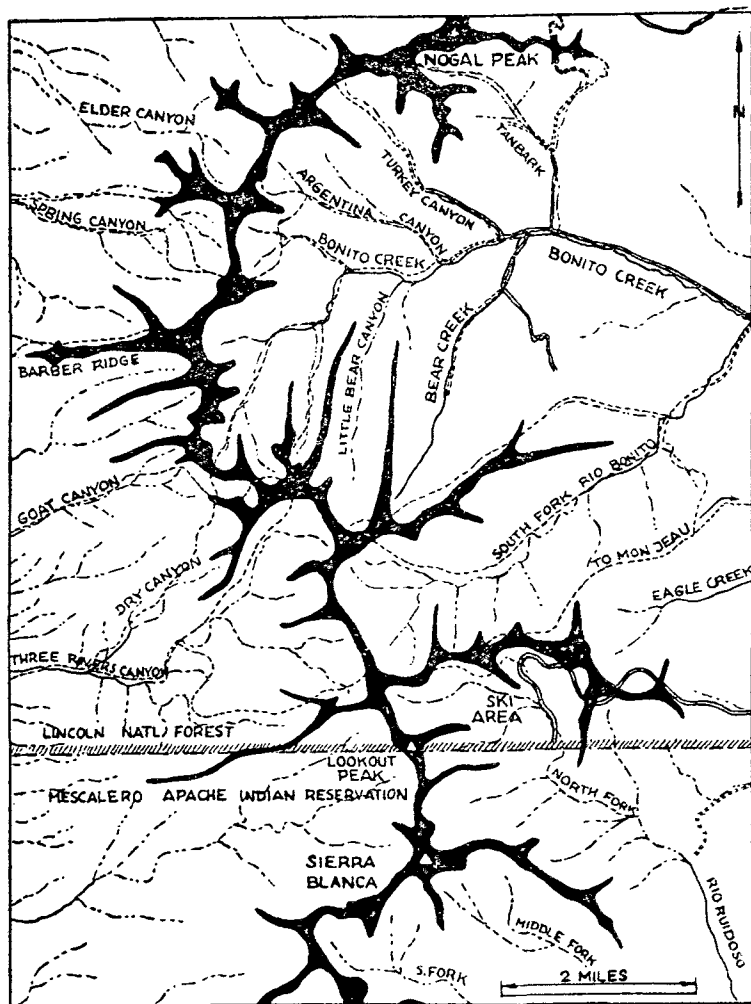
the base trail turn southeast on the 1-mile Trail Canyon trail which runs over the summit.

Sierra Blanca (White Mountains). The mountain range between Nogal Arroyo near Carrizozo and Tularosa Canyon is known as Sierra Blanca. It is a large extrusive volcanic pile made up of tuff, flows, and boulders, which has eroded from an even greater height to the present altitude of 12,003' at Sierra Blanca Peak. There is evidence that the higher parts of this range were glaciated during Pleistocene times. Petroglyphs in the foothills and pueblo ruins indicate early occupation of the region. The mountain was sacred to the ancient Indians and still is to the Apache whose reservation includes the southern part of the range. The Sierra Blanca region was Apache territory until American settlers arrived in 1862. The fertile Three Rivers Valley was settled in 1874 by Pat Coghlan, the "King of Tularosa."

Numerous intrusions of monzonite porphyry into the volcanic deposits account for the ore bodies which were mined on the east side of the range. Placer gold was first found in the vicinity of Nogal in 1865. Active prospecting began in 1882, and between then and 1916 more than one-half million dollars in ore were taken out of the Nogal district. Old mine workings are found in Nogal Canyon and even higher on the side of Nogal Peak (9,950').

Sierra Blanca Peak, Old Baldy, (12,003'), the highest peak in the range, can be climbed from the Sierra Blanca Ski Resort (9,700') which is owned and operated by the Mescalero Apache Indians. The distance is only 3 miles but the route is steep. From the ski resort one can take a gondola lift to the top of Lookout Peak (11,400'). The Sierra Blanca Ski Resort is 12 miles west of Alto on State Road 532. A pleasant 8-mile trail to the peak follows the ridge from Mon Jeau Lookout (10,000'), reached by a 12-mile road from Alto on State Road 37.

The Sierra Blanca Crest trail runs along the entire ridge of the mountains from Sierra Blanca to Nogal Peak, and numerous side trails lead to the Bonito Creek and Three Rivers valleys. Most of this high country is in the White Mountain Wild Area. Sierra Blanca is not only the highest mountain in southern New



Mexico but also has the greatest relief of any peak in the state. It towers 7,800' above the Tularosa Valley.

Sacramento Mountains. South of Tularosa Canyon the mountains have the same name as the main range. The Sacramento Mountains rise in two steps to about a mile above the Tularosa

plain. The crest near the west side of the tilted range is above 9,000' for a distance of over 20 miles. East of the crest the range slopes gradually toward the Pecos River about 80 miles away. The west side is carved into steep-walled canyons with cliffs of Pennsylvanian reef structures. These are overlain by Permian sediments. The 600' thick top layer of the range consists of San Andres limestone and is believed to carry water from the upper slopes to the Artesia region.

The Sacramento mountains were home, shrine, and hunting ground to the Apache. The famous "Eyebrow" trail in Dog Canyon (Cañon del Perro) was the scene of many battles between Apache and troops, some occurring in 1859, 1863, and 1878. The old Apache Chief Nana resumed his war near there with only 15 men. Although rheumatic and almost blind, he fought 8 battles against nearly 1,000 men, killed an estimated 200, kidnapped two white women, stole over 200 horses, and escaped. In 1880, 60 soldiers followed him into Dog Canyon. When they were on the Eyebrow trail, the Indians rolled rocks on them and killed or injured most. The Peñasco Valley, although given to the Mescalero Apache Indians, was settled by Americans. The Indians finally accepted the smaller reservation which they now occupy.

A rail line with wooded trestles was built from Alamogordo into the Sacramento Mountains in 1898 for hauling timber. Excursion trains were run frequently and the resort area at Cloudcroft was opened in 1899. The railroad was abandoned in 1947. The U.S. Air Force maintains a solar observatory, named Sunspot, on Sacramento Peak (9,250'), 17 miles south of Cloudcroft on paved road.

Forest Service trails are found in Dog, Mule, and Alamo canyons. Each year in September the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce sponsors a tour of Dog Canyon, on foot or horse. The trails connect with the Forest Service road from High Rolls on State Road 83. The 1.5-mile Tally trail from Cloudcroft leads to a viewpoint. For more extended hiking one can take the 6-mile scenic trail from Sacramento Peak to Hornbuckle Hill. Campgrounds are available near Cloudcroft and in Karr Canyon. Alamo Peak (9,685') is an old fire lookout.